2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 AWll Kerala AWll
Central Kerala Nayar

593 to the kāranavan. Even in relation to small children they tended to seek the backing of a brother to maintain discipline in the home. Old women who had passed the menopause had the greatest authority. They could move freely about the village, travel alone on pilgrimages, and wield influence over their younger brothers and sons. [562] But even old women in some contexts found themselves united with their juniors as a group of legal minors under the command of a male authority.

Under these circumstances the mutual behavior of women was intimate and informal. Their joint tasks, carried out in the confined space of the kitchen, encouraged this intimacy. Further, as natal kinswomen they were habituated to each other from birth. Unlike a woman and her daughters-in-law in a patrilineal household, their group membership was unitary and they experienced a continuity in major roles and loyalties from birth to death.

593 561 461 If she were competent, the oldest woman of the household delegated its tasks, allowing flexibility for seasonal variation and unusual occurrences. Generally, girls who had not reached puberty ran errands between houses, did small outdoor tasks, and played with their younger siblings. The younger married women shared the heavy work of pounding paddy, milking cows, cleaning dishes, and most of the cooking. Old women had pride of place in the kitchen and living room. They supervised cookery, occupied the best seats, and controlled their juniors' consumption of betel leaves, areca nuts, and tobacco from the family box. Elderly mothers took pride in serving their children and grandchildren with food on birthdays. In a large house young married women had considerable leisure and privileges. Through the day they took turns visiting the village bathing pool in couples, an event which gave opportunity for gossip and allowed them to be seen by (although not to converse with) the men of neighboring groups. [422] [613] Old women proudly distributed the taravād's jointly owned jewelry among the young and marriageable women, helped them to apply cosmetics and to dress their hair, and obtained a vicarious satisfaction from their marital conquests. For a few years —until she had several children—a young woman's life was gay and not overburdened with work. Women of childbearing age also had [841] [844] periods of respite from the kitchen. They were secluded in an inner room for three days during menstruation and did no household tasks for ninety days after a birth. In these conditions the division of labor was not strict and the segments descended from women were not segregated in their functions. Women wielded most control over their

3:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 AWll Kerala AWll
North Kerala Nayar

THE PROPERTY GROUP

The property group, a segment of the lineage, was among Nambiar commoners of roughly the same size and internal composition as among the Nayar retainers of Central Kerala. Its members jointly owned both movable and immovable property in the same manner. Its kāranavan managed the estate, had legal guardianship over members, and was legally responsible for them to the local caste assembly and to the chief. All Nayar property groups appear to have owned some garden and rice lands as *jenmis*. In addition some leased land on kānam tenure from chiefs, royalty, or Brahmans if any were present in their village. A property group whose membership was expanding might bring under cultivation waste land belonging to the chief on a tenure known as *kurikānam*. The tenant had the right of occupancy for twelve years without paying rent; he then paid an annual share of produce to the landlord. The improvements he made (trees, houses, etc.) were his own and he could not be evicted without compensation for them.

Residence was ideally *avunculocal*. Plural marriages for women were forbidden, and a man normally brought his wife to live with him on his matrilineal estate for the duration of the marriage. This mode of residence was apparently related to population density and to the sexual division of labor. Some duolocal marriages did exist between partners living in nearby houses in the same village. However, houses and villages were so scattered that most men would have had difficulty in maintaining a visiting relationship with a wife. Matrilocal residence was also disadvantageous because men did much of the work of cultivation on their own estates, were required to defend their estates against invaders, and were mobilized by the chiefs in war on the basis of property-group membership. A few junior men lived matrilocally for short periods, but the kāranavan and most of the adult men lived on their own estates.

In the relatively small property groups of commoners, the dwelling group was thus often an avunculocal extended family. It would comprise a group of brothers, their wives and immature children, their adult sisters' sons, and the wives and small children of these men. Divorced or widowed women born into the property group also had the right of permanent residence there, and married women born into it might return to live there for several weeks or months when they wished.

In the larger property groups of some commoners, village headmen, and chiefs, the main ancestral house might be reserved for

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906)1912
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Nayar

and one with less than that number was called a *Désavázhi*. There were in those days no taxes levied from the people, and the chief from the Rajas down to the *Désavázhi* possessed demesne lands for their support which were cultivated either by themselves or leased to *kudiyáns* or tenants; but the following were the chief sources of income, based upon feudal rights and privileges. The rulers levied custom duties upon exports and imports, taxes upon houses of fishermen, tradesmen and professional men. Criminal fines went to fill their coffers, and succession duties were levied upon the estates of deceased persons, especially those who held offices of State or rights over land. Outcast women were made a two-fold source of profit. Lewd adulterous women were made over to the chiefs with a premium for the trouble of looking after them, and the chiefs used in turn to sell the women to foreign merchants as slaves or wives to *Chettis*. The estates of persons who died without heirs were escheated, nor could an heir be adopted without the Raja's consent, for which a fee was generally levied. Protection fees from strangers and merchants were levied under various names and customary presents were the ruler's dues on occasions of feast or funeral. Wrecks were his perquisites, and various animals his monopoly. Concerning the former, Marco Polo wrote about the kingdom of Eli, "And you must know that if any ship enters the estuary and anchors when she has been bound for some other port, they seize her and plunder the cargo. They say that you are bound somewhere else, and it is God that sent you hither to us, so we have a right to all your goods, and think it no sin to act thus. This naughty custom prevails all over the Provinces of India, to wit, that if a ship be driven by a stress of weather into some other port than that to which it is bound, it is sure to be plundered. But if a ship came bound originally to the place, they received it with all honour and gave it protection."[1] The custom of the taking of ships and cargoes lasted down to recent times, until the English factory at Tellicherry entered into agreements with three of the country-powers for the exemption of English vessels from such seizures.

Among the animals that became the property of the Raja were cows with three or five dugs, cattle that has killed a man or other animals, cattle with a white spot near the corner of

1. Yulies Marco Polo, page 374.

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906) 1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

the eye, buffaloes with white tips to their tails, wild elephants caught in traps and wild hogs that had fallen into wells.

Even in social matters, these chieftains had supreme powers. In the settlement of marriages in any part of the country, the Nayars had to obtain the chieftain's sanction who held sway over the particular locality. The custom is even now in vogue though in a visibly weakened form. In the celebration of a *Kettu kalyánam* or *sambandham* in any part of the country, the parties concerned visited the chieftain and bought his consent with presents. For without such consent no settlement and celebration thereafter could be arranged. His consent had to be procured even for the holding of festivals.

The chieftain's powers were so great that, if a wife living with her husband proved an object of attraction to another, adequate presents to the chieftain would buy him a formal writ, giving him the rights of a husband over that woman. Thus even so late as only a generation or two ago, the chieftain's power was exercised in the encouragement of polyandry.

When a tali-tying ceremony had to be performed for a girl of any decent family in a locality, she was taken to the local chieftain with a nuzzar or *tirumulkázhcha* and other things prepared for the festival that was to follow. In return the girl was given a golden bracelet which she was authorised to wear in his presence. No girl who had not received such a one could wear it.

In certain parts of the State people were afraid to erect buildings of more than one storey, lest they should incur the inexorable wrath of the chieftain; nor were they allowed to tile thatched houses. Departures from these customs were allowed only with the consent of the chieftain, embodied in a writ issued by him. In rural parts even to this day such restrictions are not totally inoperative. In the State His Highness the Raja gives his sanction in regard to some social matters even to this day and Nambutiri landlords exercise a similar authority among the tenants occupying their lands. Certain kinds of conveyances such as palanquins and dholies were reserved only for chieftains while the *Pallichans* were the only people who were employed to carry them. Various titles [1]

1. Vide pages 18-20.

VEHICLE DENSITY

	Per mile of road	*Per sq. mile*	*Per 100,000 Population*
Kerala	2.14	1.54	146.6
West Bengal	1.20	0.92	111.1
India	1.20	0.32	104.0

Kerala comes up with the highest indices, but this is not surprising as the railway serves only certain limited areas and road transport has to serve the other areas.

8.19 Trivandrum and Calicut districts have the largest concentration of goods vehicles on the road ; Alleppey, Ernakulam, and Quilon figure next. As regards the stage carriages, Trivandrum district has the largest fleet ; Trichur, Ernakulam, and Calicut districts also account for large numbers of stage carriages but these are much smaller. The Coimbatore-Cochin route is saturated with goods traffic in cotton bales, fertilizers, planks, tea, tapioca, machinery, hardware, etc., particularly since the opening of the Mangalapuzha bridge replacing the Desom ferry. The traffic was expected to go up by about 50 per cent during 1961. Similarly the traffic between Calicut and Coimbatore, across the Palghat gap and between Calicut and Wynad (timber traffic) bound for destinations in Salem, Madras, Mysore, Tuticorin, etc., has been on the increase. As industrial developments presage considerable increase of traffic on these routes, problems of alignment, bridging, extra lanes, expressway sections, etc., may call for more investment and additional construction.

8.20 About 250 trucks are operating between Mysore and Kerala on inter-State routes. They are subject to the restriction that they may not operate on more than three important straight routes, not exceeding 300 miles in each State. Inter-State routing arrangements between Madras and Kerala are yet to be completed.

8.21 The business in goods transport in the State suffers from the preponderance of owner-operators of single trucks (1,717 operators). There are only five operators in the State who own more than 10 trucks. The predominance of the owner-operator of single trucks is likely to prevent the industry from obtaining the economies and advantages of enhanced efficiency resulting from better organization of road transport in the State.

8.22 Among other features of the transport system special mention may be made of chronic over-loading of vehicles and the beginning of movement in truck-trailer combinations in order to circumvent difficulties arising from restrictions of weight over weak bridges and culverts. Study and analysis of road transport problems are rendered more difficult by the paucity of data regarding traffic, the absence of regular departmental road census of vehicles and traffic, etc. A limited degree of nationalization of goods transport by road has been introduced on the Cochin-Mannar route where 10 to 18 trucks carry tea from the estates to Cochin, and rice, manures and machinery from Cochin to the estates.

8.23 Despite an early start, the nationalized road passenger services have not made much headway. About 458 vehicles are on the road, covering 24.9 million miles annually, and carrying about 65.3 million passengers. The larger revenues resulting from increased traffic and higher fares,[1] have not improved the net profits of

[1] The revenues rose by Rs. 31 lakhs.